



Meet the Forest Service

"Caring for the Land and Serving People"

What is the Forest Service?

The USDA Forest Service is a Federal agency in the Department of Agriculture that manages public lands in national forests and grasslands, is the largest forestry research organization in the world, and provides assistance to State and private forestry agencies. Gifford Pinchot, the first Chief of the Forest Service, summed up the mission of the Forest Service—"to provide the greatest amount of good for the greatest amount of people in the long run."

When and why was the Forest Service established?

With the transferring of the Forest Reserves, and renaming and increasing the responsibilities of the Bureau of Forestry, Congress established the Forest Service in 1905, during the **Presidency of Theodore Roosevelt**. The primary original direction for the national forests was to provide a continuous flow of quality water and timber for the Nation's benefit, while also allowing other uses. In 1933, the USDA Forest Service authored "A National Plan for American Forestry" which recognized the concept of multiple purpose management, was published by the U.S. Senate. An escalating public demand for a variety of benefits, goods, and services from these lands led to the Multiple Use/Sustained Yield Act of 1960, in which Congress directed the Forest Service to manage national forests for the sustained yield of renewable resources such as water, forage, wildlife, wood, and recreation.

What does the Forest Service do?

The job of Forest Service managers in the National Forest System is to help people share the benefits from and enjoy the forests and grasslands, while conserving the environment for generations yet to come. Multiple use means managing resources under the best combination of uses to benefit the American people while ensuring the productivity of the land and protecting the quality of the environment. Not all potential uses of these Federal lands are carried out on every acre, but a balance is determined through professional judgment and public opinion.

How is the National Forest System organized?

The Forest Service manages public lands, known collectively as the National Forest System, located in 44 States, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. The lands comprise about 8.5 percent of the total land area in the United States --191 million acres (77.3 million hectares), which is an area about the size of Texas. National forests provide opportunities for recreation in natural environments. With

more people living in urban areas, national forests are becoming more important and valuable to Americans. In addition to the commodity benefits produced from these lands, people enjoy a wide variety of recreation activities on national forests, including backpacking in remote backcountry areas, camping in developed campgrounds, driving an all-terrain vehicle over a challenging trail, enjoying the views along a scenic byway, or fishing in a great trout stream. The natural resources on these lands are some of the Nation's greatest assets and have major economic, environmental, and social significance for all Americans.

There are four levels of national forest administrative offices:

Ranger District: The district ranger and his or her staff may be your first point of contact with the Forest Service. There are more than 600 ranger districts. Each district has a staff of 10 to 100 people. The districts vary in size from 50,000 acres (20,000 hectares) to more than 1 million acres (400,000 hectares). On-the-ground management activities occur on the ranger districts, including trail maintenance, campground operation, and vegetation and wildlife habitat management.

National Forest: There are 155 national forests and 20 grasslands. Each forest is composed of several ranger districts. The person in charge of a national forest is called the forest supervisor; the district rangers work for the forest supervisor. The headquarters of a national forest is called the supervisor's office. This level coordinates activities among districts, allocates the budget, and provides technical support to each district.

Region: There are 9 regions, numbered 1 through 10 (Region 7 was eliminated some years ago). The regions are broad geographic areas, usually including several States. The person in charge is called the regional forester. Forest supervisors of the national forests within a region report to the regional forester. The regional office staff coordinates activities between national forests, monitors activities on national forests to ensure quality operations, provides guidance for forest plans, and allocates budgets to the forests.

National Level: This is commonly called the Washington Office, or "W.O." The person who oversees the entire Forest Service is called the Chief. The Chief is a Federal employee who reports to the Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment in the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). The Chief's staff provides broad policy and direction for the agency, works with the President's Administration to develop a budget to submit to Congress, provides information to Congress on accomplishments, and monitors activities of the agency.

How is Forest Service Research and Development (R&D) Organized?

Forest Service Research and Development: The Forest Service provides the scientific and technical knowledge necessary to protect and sustain the Nation's

natural resources, providing benefits to people within the capabilities of the land. Research is conducted by scientists located at research and development stations, the Forest Products Laboratory, and the International Institute of Tropical Forestry.

There are 3 primary levels of R&D offices, including the National Level (Chief's Office):

Project Level Research Work Units: The Project Leader and his or her staff are located at federal laboratories, universities, experimental forests, and other field locations. Each project may have scientists conducting research at one or more satellite locations. Scientists report to the Project Leader and carry out basic and applied research in many scientific disciplines: forestry, ecology, pathology, fisheries and wildlife, economics and social sciences, statistics, chemistry, entomology, genetics, engineering, fire science, hydrology and more. Project Leaders report to the Station Director of their geographic area, usually through an Assistant Director.

Station Level: There are 6 Research and Development Stations across broad geographic regions, the Forest Products Laboratory, and the International Institute of Tropical Forestry. Their Directors report to the Deputy Chief for R&D in the Chief's Office of the Forest Service. The Director's office staff coordinates planning for research to meet the needs of public and private managers of forested lands, provides administrative support, and facilitates getting the results of research and development accomplishments to the people who can use the information to ensure sustainability and productivity of the nation's forests.

How does the Forest Service carry out its other activities?

State and Private Forestry: The Forest Service cooperates with State and local governments, forest industries, other private landowners, and forest users in the management, protection, and development of forest land in non-Federal ownership. Activities include cooperation in urban interface fire management and urban forestry. State and Private Forestry works through the regional offices and through a special Northeastern Area office to provide these services.

Administration: The Forest Service provides leadership, direction, quality assurance, and customer service in carrying out agency business and human resource programs, such as Job Corps, the Senior Community Service Employment Program, and the volunteer program. The agency hires, trains, evaluates, and promotes its employees; pays employees and contractors; acquires office space, equipment and supplies; and maintains the computer and communications technology needed to ensure efficient and effective operations.

International Forestry: The Forest Service plays a key role in formulating policy and coordinating U.S. support for the protection and sound management of the world's forest resources. It works closely with other agencies such as the Agency for International Development, the U.S. Department of State, and the

Environmental Protection Agency, as well as with nonprofit development organizations, wildlife organizations, universities, and international assistance organizations. The Forest Service's international work serves to link people and communities striving to protect and manage forests throughout the world.

How can you find out more about the Forest Service?

Write, call, or stop by any Forest Service office to learn more about the Forest Service. Or visit the Forest Service Web Site at: <http://www.fs.fed.us>